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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 000689

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: RULING NPP NOTCHES WIN NUMBER FIVE

REF: ACCRA 0632

Classified By: Polchief Richard Kaminski, reason 1.5(B/D).

Once More With Feeling

1. (U) Thirteen days after its convincing by-election win in Navrongo (reftel), President Kufuor's ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) won by a similarly large margin in the Gomoa East by-election March 8. The NPP candidate received 11,380 votes to the NDC's 5,356 (a minor party candidate received 175 votes). With this victory, the fifth consecutive win over former President Rawlings' NDC in parliamentary by-elections, the NPP held a seat vacant since the death of its MPP in a car accident several months ago.

NDC Claims Electoral Fraud

2. (U) In increasingly histrionic terms, the NDC has claimed electoral fraud and voter intimidation. Rawlings, the day before the by-election, held an emotional press conference in which he alleged "incredible electoral malpractices," including "officially-sanctioned violence," which, he alleged, were "brazen and seemingly institutionalized." Immediately after the announcement of the results by the Electoral Commission, the NDC General Secretary Dr. Josiah-Aryeh announced his party's rejection of

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the results (without specifying what, if any, actions he or other party officials would take as a result). Rawlings also called upon Ghanaians to join a "March for Survival" called by the NDC to protest the NPP government's "disastrous economic policies," "entrenched nepotism," and "gross abuse of incumbency."

3. (SBU) However, the election was in fact largely peaceful and uneventful, but for a few isolated shouting matches between rival party supporters. Emboffs circulating on election day saw no sign of harassment or intimidation of voters. In an election with a relatively low turnout by Ghanaian standards, approximately 40 percent, many election officials had little to do during long hours of slow voting on a hot and humid day (all polling stations located out of doors) but fan themselves and find a bit of shade. Officers from the British Mission had observations similar to our own. A nine-member team from a prominent local NGO, the Center for Democratic Development, declared the results to be "free and fair despite some incidents."

NPP Takes No Prisoners

4. (SBU) The NPP government does employ its powers of incumbency without hesitation. As in Navrongo, Vice President Aliu Mahama toured the constituency for several days just before the election as part of an "official" trip to the Central Region, and police canceled previously-scheduled NDC rallies ostensibly for his "security" (this time the NDC refused to reschedule several of them). Crews from the government-owned Electricity Company of Ghana feverishly hung poles and strung wire from community to community up to and including election day, and extra road crews worked on farms roads across the area. The funeral of the deceased MP, two days before the vote, became an extended NPP roadshow, with the coffin taken from town to town, and President Kufuor attending services. Direct cash payments to traditional leaders, and "gifts" of roofing tin, fuel, cloth and other items to constituents, while difficult to confirm, are common practice by all political parties.

Comment

5. (C) One more by-election comes in two weeks time, this in a constituency vacant after the NDC MP resigned for "personal reasons." Some of those reasons include division and disenchantment within NDC ranks. While the NPP devotes considerable resources to by-elections, the NDC, out of power, out of money, and out of favor with the electorate, strains to compete. Local reaction to former President Rawlings broad attack on the Kufuor government has been relatively muted; his comments simply do not reflect the actual experience of Ghanaians. One worry: while the NPP

takes great delight in handing the NDC yet another crushing loss, the level of emotion on the part of some NDC activists is rising; they are beginning to substitute hot-headed threats for cool analysis of their own poor showing. Another stinging defeat may be coming their way. End comment.

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